

Reuters Exclusive (1-5) EPA may retest PA. water near fracking

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By Edward McAllister and Timothy Gardner

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK (Reuters) - Federal regulators are considering retesting water supplies at a small town in Pennsylvania that residents say have been contaminated by natural gas drilling.

Just a month after declaring water in Dimock safe, officials from the Environmental Protection Agency are taking another look after new evidence suggested that drinking water could be polluted worse than originally thought.

"EPA is considering next steps including conducting some samples of well water in the area," the EPA told Reuters on Thursday, after receiving hundreds of pages of data from Dimock residents.

Federal officials have visited affected residents this week, some of whom have been without fresh drinking water since drilling by energy company Cabot Oil & Gas began three years ago.

About a dozen Dimock households are running out of water after state regulators said in November that Cabot could halt trucked deliveries of water to residents.

The last planned truck arranged by environmentalists arrived on Tuesday.

The EPA is conducting a national study on the impacts of the natural gas extraction technique called fracking, which involves injecting chemical-laced water and sand into wells to release gas in shale rock and which is widely used across Pennsylvania.

Environmentalists say fracking pollutes fresh water as fluids seep from drilling wells into aquifers and other supply sources. A recent EPA study showed that harmful chemicals from fracking fluids were likely present in a Wyoming aquifer near the town of Pavillion.

Industry denies that fracking, which is being done across the United States, poses a threat to drinking water.

(Reporting By Timothy Gardner in Washington and Edward McAllister in New York; Editing by Andrea Evans)